DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 375 190 UD 029 942

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TITLE Multicultural Leadership for Restructured Constituencies.
PUB DATE 94
NOTE 14p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Conflict; Cooperation; *Cultural Awareness; Cultural Influences; *Decentralization; *Educational Change; Elementary Secondary Education; Ethics; Governance; *Instructional Leadership; Interaction; Multicultural Education; Principals; *School Restructuring; Urban Schools
IDENTIFIERS *Conceptual Models; *Constituency Development; Constructive Controversy; Reform Efforts

ABSTRACT

A conceptual model is developed that presents leadership as process and participation by followers in urban schools in which decentralization efforts are underway. The model advances the work of urban school administrators as they deal with constituencies from diverse perspectives and predilections. Applications of the model involve behaviors that are useful for principals involved in school restructuring. It is useful to see leadership not just in terms of a focal person but as a group process that occurs within the context of a group culture and that requires interaction among many participants. This view is particularly useful in urban environments with great social and cultural diversity. In the context of the transformational leadership that is described, conflict becomes the focal point at which people come together to solve problems, resolve differences, and learn to cooperate with a leader. Leadership is manifested as multicultural group processes that include communication and intuition, interaction among constituency groups, collaboration, negotiation, conflict management, and the ethical response to identified problems. (Contains 52 references.) (SLD)

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ED 375 190

MULTICULTURAL LEADERSHIP

FOR RESTRUCTURED CONSTITUENCIES

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The present paper develops a conceptual model of leadership as process and/or participation by followers in urban schools where decentralization efforts are underway. The constituency leadership paradigm emerges from background literature including: Restructuring organizations (Bolman and Deal (1991), transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; and Gardner, 1990); dissatisfaction theory (Iannoconne and Lutz, 1984, 1986); Intermediate and Multiple Leadership (Strodl 1992, & 1993); Politics and community constituencies (Blase, 1991); Conflict Management (Borrisoff and Victor, 1989; Pruitt and Rubin, 1986).

Educational Significance: The potential for conflict may be expected when people of dissimilar backgrounds, different cognitive predilections come together to make decisions for the larger pluralistic community served by a school.

Open conflict naturally a part of the school situation, but is avoided by most people. Conflict is inevitable when numerous cultural constituencies converge upon the school to interact in meaningful ways.

Conflict is usually dreaded by school administrators, but within this conceptualization conflict may be used to determine agendas for long term cooperative relationships. Conflict is likely among groups with dissimilar ways of perceiving school events and activities. Conflict may be used to negotiate cooperation among school constituencies

and to make the work of teachers and administrators appropriate to the needs of the immediate community.

The ways in which schools and various social components of the community relate interpersonally is quite complicated. Sociologists would interpret this interaction in terms of politics. But, for school principals and other school level administrators is it probably more helpful to contemplate community connections in terms of leadership constituent networks. Within the schools' community of families the school leader associates with leaders of constituency groups throughout those parts of the community which send children to the school. In schools which have adopted school restructuring arrangements for school governance these standards for school governance develop to great importance. This paper includes a theoretical analysis of leadership which will advance the work of the urban school administrator as they deal with constituencies from diverse perspectives and predilections. Applications of this model involve useful behaviors for school principals to apply in getting beyond the limitations of routine management activities, to transform their schools by accentuating contributions from various school constituencies.

Theoretical Perspective:

Restructuring is viewed by Bolman and Deal (1991) as response to bureaucratic Balkanization which prevents an

organization from adajpting to the demands of its external (social or economic) environment. Within organizations there are natural tensions which predictably persist holding together structural elements of an organization. Economic, social, or political demands build up requring an organization to complete some spring cleaning. Thus, hierarchical structures are changed, people are promoted, demoted, or involuntarily separated from the school, association or company. Restructuring may follow social fiascos and political and failures which are embarassing to the school and its governing organization. In the same sense that jprofessional team coaches are replaced following a loosing season, principals and superintendents are often replaced following budget defeats, embarassing state inspections, school board elections, and other symbolic times when dissatisfied citizens can vocalize their criticisms and dissatisfactions most successfully.

Constituency leadership involves creating a symbiosis of dissimilar people. Within the social context which values diversity, a leader of community constituencies encourages dissemination of distinctive cultural symbols and values, while teaching others to value cultural features of other people. Constituency leadership assumes that it is never possible to please everyone completely all of the time. Rather, the leader shoulders responsibility for negotiating among dissimilar constituencies to consummate compromises and synergistic ordering of group values and

people, knowing that "top down management" will never work with such a diverse situation (Olneck, 1990; Strodl, 1992).

Exploring the "fit" between people and organizations, the constituent leader examines what people need from their experiences with organizations. Restructuring organizations, with an intentional dedication to broader constituency interests, permits schools to bring forth arrangements for broader participation in decision making among people from diverse cultural and linguistic values, and ways of thinking (Bolman and Deal, 1991).

Within the context of large organizations and communities, Bolman and Deal suggest four propositions to summarize the political perspective for power and conflict:

1. Organizations are coalitions including subgrouups of ethnic, cultural, professional and gender perspectives; thus, authority is a limitation which impedes integration of organizational and individual needs, while conflict management, coalition building, and negotiations among constituency groups empowers groups and people with dissimilar values and interests.
2. Enduring differences among people include values, preferences, bliefs, information, and perceptions of reality. Cultural conflict occurs betrween two groups with different values, bedliefs and life-styles. Assuming that cultural conflict is a part of school leadership permits leaders to deal openly with gradual negotiations and

adaptations which may overcome these difficulties among people.

3. Important decisions involve allocations of scarce resources and thus inherently involve conflict over the more important decisions.

4. Goals emerge from bargaining and negotiations among groups members from different constituency groups and coalitions. Thus, important goals do not come from the top, but from the bottom through an ongoing process of negotiation and interaciton among participants who are in a position to bring constituent groups together.

Leadership is often discussed in terms of leaders and followers, but mostly in terms of one focal person. This paper develop the concept of leadership as a group process occuring within the context of group culture: requiring interaction among participants, leaders, followers and resisters, all contributors to the cooperative movement of the group including a broad range of roles and kinds of participation. While there is often one focal leader, there are always others who contribute toward the total process of community development. This particularly true in urban environments where are is great social and cultural diversity.

Transformational leadership is human behavior that promotes cooperative actions and supportive environments. Responsibilities are shared, opportunities are perceived, and growth takes place. Leadership fosters teacher

development, community linkages, personal growth among people who participate in community activities.

Schools represent community efforts to benefit their children, understandings worked out among people who see a larger social need beyond their own immediate needs. Schools are points of convergence, where numerous segments of the community focus their cultural interests via their children. To the extent schools can negotiate these commonalties, they will be successful in sharing the benefits of a cooperative and developing society.

More than other institutions, schools represent microcosms of the community. Children from all segments of the community come to the school and real family issues. Often these are parent issues, but also family feuds and neighborhood conflicts, family squabbles are brought to school by students to be reenacted during recess times and other low structure times of the school day. Neighborhood differences and conflicts are brought into school by children. School discord appears in low structure areas of schools, such as cafeterias and playgrounds. Stresses resulting from community and neighborhood environments are reflected in the behaviors of the children in school. In formulating a model of leadership, it is important to incorporate the stresses and strains of schools and their communities. Principals and teachers acquire moral and ethical support for teaching from numerous constituency

groups by negotiating with constituency groups leaders and by including them in policy making.

School constituencies include groups of people who cluster together according to neighborhood arrangements, church groups, ethnic groups, cultural and linguistic groups and social groups from all segments of the school community. In this regard, transformational leadership provides a framework for school leaders to use when dealing with community groups and their leaders. Group process in this higher level of leadership involves identifying agendas of man y different groups and providing a forum for negotiating cooperation and goal setting for schools.

Iannaconne and Lutz (1984, 1986) have suggested that antagonism results when communities perceive that school leaders have not been responsive to their concerns. Within the context of transformational leadership, conflict is the focal point at which people come together to solve problems, resolve differences and learn to cooperate with a leader (Burns, 1978; Gardner, 1990; and Bass, 1990).

The leadership is manifested as multicultural group processes, including the components of communication and intuition, interaction among constituency groups, collaboration processes among groups, leaders and followers, negotiations and problem solving, constituency group agenda setting, conflict management and ethical responses to identified problems.

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"Empowerment is the vision and ability of a leadership or group participant to make a contribution which is consistent with the larger perception of community needs, organizational needs, and the social dynamics of the situation."